![Prudential logo]

PRUDENTIAL CASE STUDY

"SQL Monitor now makes the team look more professional."

How Redgate's SQL Monitor makes monitoring a host of production servers easier, faster, and more professional

![Redgate logo]

Background

Prudential plc is an international financial services group with significant operations in Asia, the US, and the UK. Founded in London in 1848 on the principles of integrity, security, and prudence, it now serves around 25 million insurance customers and has £505 billion of assets under management.

George Sibbald is a Senior DBA at Prudential. For the last 16 years he's been a SQL Server DBA. His team supports 100 production servers at PGDS, the IT arm of Prudential, supporting operations in the UK and Europe. As can be imagined, the customer data contained on the servers is critical to the operation of the group companies. George is responsible for production support, with a focus on performance and disaster recovery.

Identifying the need for monitoring

The performance of the servers used to be monitored using hand-written custom queries. As required, George would go into the servers to run the queries to see current performance. This not only took time to run but didn't give him the full picture.

As George explains: "If someone came to us with a performance issue that happened in the past, we had no way of telling what the actual performance was at that point or what caused the issue. We identified a pressing need to be able to go back in time and see what was happening in the database at any given moment."

"Redgate's SQL Monitor has by far the best look and feel"

Prudential started looking around for tools that could not only provide a historical view but could identify poor performing queries in terms of duration, CPU, or I/O.

"Some of the tools we looked at seemed to have all the bells and whistles but the layout and interface was overly complex," George explains. "Redgate's SQL Monitor had by far the best look and feel, with all the relevant services grouped on the same screen. SQL Monitor had the functionality I needed and presented the information in the clearest and simplest form."

He was just as pleased when it came to installation time. "SQL Monitor was very easy to install and set up. I really liked the web-based presentation layer, which meant I didn't have to install any client on the server or client machines. If I want to share the information with other team members, I just give them a URL."

Part of the daily SQL Server routine

George has only been using Redgate's SQL Monitor for three months, but in that short time he has already seen the value it can deliver.

"Every morning when I come in, I check the alerts that have popped up on SQL Monitor. Any problems, such as deadlocks or maintenance issues, are highlighted straight away.

"We recently had an issue with a deadlock on one of the servers. SQL Monitor alerted us and pinpointed where the problem was, so we were able to resolve it quickly. Without SQL Monitor, I would have had to turn on a deadlock trace – but to do that, I would have needed to know a deadlock was causing an issue in the first place. We certainly saved a lot of time by using SQL Monitor and it helped identify a potentially serious difficulty we weren't aware of."

It is not just the alerting that George likes. He also uses SQL Monitor in a proactive way to carry out health checks on his servers. "By using SQL Monitor on some of the most important production servers, I can dig deep, fine tune the performance, and spot issues before they become problems."

Another feature that George finds invaluable is the ability to see if the system is running within normal parameters using the baseline function. "When someone comes to me complaining that things are a bit slow and asking if anything unusual is happening, I can simply compare current performance to a healthy baseline and spot anything abnormal."

"SQL Monitor now makes the team look more professional"

"One of the key things I like is that SQL Monitor now makes the team look more professional," George continues. "We have the answers to questions, especially when people ask about historical issues. I used to have the situation that when someone came to me and asked why performance was bad half an hour ago, I couldn't tell them. With SQL Monitor, I can."

The value of SQL Monitor within Prudential has spread wider than just the DBA team. "The senior management appreciate these sort of tools. I can show them the graphs and reports straight out of SQL Monitor and give them information they need faster and in a clearer way."

SQL Monitor has also helped add value to the service DBA provide to developers. "If I go to a developer and tell them there's a problem with a query, I'm more welcome," George explains. "SQL Monitor lets me pinpoint the problem and show exactly what the code is doing, making their job easier and showing we can add real value."

SQL Monitor has proved to be an invaluable tool for George and his DBA colleagues at Prudential. It has saved them time, improved their working relationships with other parts of the company, and made them look more professional. They are able to see what is happening with the servers now and in the past, giving them a complete overview and making them more effective DBAs.